

# First nesting record of Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* in South-East Asia

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Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* is a widespread and fairly common species, breeding across southern Europe, north and central Africa, the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent, southern Siberia, southern and eastern Tibet, much of China, the Korean peninsula, and Japan, wintering largely within this range (Turner & Rose 1989). Although known to nest as close to Vietnam as south-west Yunnan (Meyer de Schauensee 1984), it has apparently not been previously recorded nesting in South-East Asia (Robson 2008).

While passing through Dau Cau village, Duc Hong commune, Trung Khanh district, about 8 km south of Trung Khanh town, Cao Bang province, East Tonkin, Vietnam, on 23 April 2009, we noted an unusual nest on a building. The nest was a domed shape with a long tubular entrance, and was fixed to the underside of a ledge built to keep the rain out of a window below. Recognising this mud nest as belonging to a hirundine but not being familiar with similar nests from northern Vietnam, we stopped to identify the species that had built it. We soon observed Red-rumped Swallows finishing construction of the nest with mud from a streambank very nearby. A photograph of the nest was taken and submitted as evidence along with this note.

The birds were identified as Red-rumped Swallow of the subspecies *japonica* owing to their small size, narrow streaking on the underparts, and near-complete rufous nuchal collars. The closely related Striated Swallow *H. striolata*, sometimes even considered conspecific, probably breeds in West Tonkin, Vietnam, and occurs across northernmost Vietnam in winter (Robson 2008), but was not seen during this trip. The relevant subspecies, *H. s. mayri*, is more similar to Red-rumped Swallow than the boldly streaked *H. s. stanfordi* resident in central and southern Vietnam, but still differs in the same features.

Although Red-rumped Swallows were quite frequently seen in the area, no further similar nests were seen that day

or next day in Trung Khanh district. Another nest was, however, noted on 26 April 2009 in Quoc Toan commune, Tra Linh district, Cao Bang province, close to the junction between provincial road 205 and National Highway 3.

This second nest was similarly constructed under a wide ledge above a window. This architectural feature is not typical of traditional building styles in rural Cao Bang province but may be becoming commoner as an increasing number of houses are built out of concrete, reflecting changes in wealth and taste. We speculate that this continuing trend may facilitate a southwards spread of nesting Red-rumped Swallow into northern Vietnam.

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# Cronism by the Shikra *Accipiter badius*

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Cannibalism (eating a member of the same species), cainism (eating a sibling) and cronism (eating an offspring) are recorded in raptor populations worldwide (Polis 1981, Dios 2003). However, very few observations of such intraspecific predation by Indian raptors exist, rare exceptions being in

Ishtiaq & Rahmani (2000) and Rana & Prakash (2003). Here we report and discuss an instance of cronism by a common accipiter species, the Shikra *Accipiter badius*.

We observed a territorial Shikra pair at Mandakini Enclave, New Delhi, from December 2008. Adults were

seen incubating eggs first on 11 April 2009 in a nest in a eucalyptus tree, and subsequently four newly hatched chicks were seen on 7 May 2009. On 18 May 2009, the female adult (told by her yellow eyes) brought a five-striped palm squirrel *Funambulus palmarum* to the nest and fed pieces of the squirrel to all four chicks. The following evening there was a dust storm that damaged the nest. The next day, only one chick could be seen in the nest and a male Shikra (told by his red eyes) was seen feeding on one of the chicks near the nest. The female called loudly as the chick was being eaten, and the male flew to the nest tree after eating the chick. This suggested that the male in question was the chick's parent. It was not clear if the chick had been killed by the male or had died during the storm and was subsequently eaten, but we think the latter more probable. The other two missing chicks were not found; since they had not yet fledged, they had clearly been killed during or after the storm. The surviving chick fledged from the nest on 29 May 2009, and continued to use the damaged nest infrequently until 2 June 2009.

Cannibalism by raptors in any form is thought to be rare and incidental to brood reduction (Mock 1984). It may however be deliberate in response to reduced food resources (Roulin *et al.* 1999). During our observations, the area near the Shikra nest had good populations of squirrels and birds, and resources did not appear limiting. Instead, inclement weather appears to have killed the chick. This therefore appears to have been a case of weather-induced chick mortality leading to cronism. While weather-induced mortality of chicks has been documented in other raptor populations (Dawson & Bortolotti 2000), cronism (or scavenging) following such deaths appears to be rare (Moss 1979). Cronism by raptors appears to be far commoner following fratricide (siblings killing each other: Ingram 1959). Published observations of Shikra at the nest are restricted to two nests (Naoroji 2006), and more work is needed on the

species to assess if cronism is commoner than suggested by the literature.

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# The song of the Dulit Frogmouth *Batrachostomus harterti*

DENNIS YONG and BEN KING

Smythies (1960) stated that 'frogmouths seem to be incapable of making any sound'. At that time, however, few ornithologists, let alone birders, had ever seen an Asian frogmouth and practically nothing was known about them. Joe T. Marshall, Jr., did extensive nocturnal fieldwork in South-East Asia in the 1960s and 1970s, making the first tape-recordings of the Asian frogmouths, which he published in his paper and 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  LP record (Marshall 1978). Subsequently, all the other Asian frogmouths have been tape-recorded except for

Dulit Frogmouth *Batrachostomus harterti*, and they have proved to be among the most vocal of nocturnal birds.

In early September 2004, we spent a week in the Kelabit Uplands of north-eastern Sarawak, Borneo, in an attempt to find and tape-record the Dulit Frogmouth. At c.1,060 m, about 04h00 on 4 September 2004, we heard a loud, trumpeting *whoooooaaah* which we both knew instantly was the frogmouth. Fortunately, the bird called again and we got a good recording (see Fig. 1)